Language, identity and interculturality

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CHAPTER 4

Identity, interculturality, and study abroad

Introduction

The concept of identity is probably one of the most important and researched concepts in the social and human sciences today. It has also received widespread interest by the public and titillated the media (Sen 2006: 1). In many studies of interculturality, identity has taken over and somewhat substituted the contested concept of *culture* in order to reflect 'critical questions to do with access, power, desire, difference and resistance' (Pennycook 2001: 6). Identity goes hand in hand with other concepts, which affect all societies: inclusion, equality/equity, and social justice. It is thus a very relevant concept for study abroad. Besides potentially transforming students, study abroad inevitably leads to implicit/explicit involvement with these phenomena.

Identity is a highly interdisciplinary concept. Sociologists, philosophers, anthropologists and linguists, amongst others, have discussed, debated and analysed identity. Identity has been central in the so-called 'hard sciences', in e.g. research on genetics and epigenetics (Mukherjee 2016). Psychologists have also extensively addressed identity issues. Erikson's (1968) seminal work on ego identity deals with a subjective feeling of consistency and continuity of self across situations. Social psychologists such as Moscovici (1961/1976) have insisted on the importance of belonging to groups in strengthening people's identity. For Sen (2006: 1) 'a sense of identity can [thus] be a source not merely of pride and joy, but also of strength and confidence'. Yet, as we shall see in this chapter, identity is an unstable process which is context- and interlocutor-dependent, of which one is not always in control. Identity has been described as *imagined, transformed, repositioned, affiliated, disaffiliated*, *brought about,*

contested and *resisted* — sometimes with all of these elements simultaneously (Dervin and Risager 2015; Benson et al. 2013; Jackson 2014). Identity can also lead to conflict, unequal power relations and forms of discrimination (the 'dark' sides of identity) (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel 2010).

This chapter helps the reader to reflect on what is meant by identity and discusses what researchers have discovered about the influence of identity elements (e.g., gender, age, language, cultural, sexual orientation) on interculturality in relation to the positioning and learning of student sojourners. Our review also highlights the 'dark' sides of identity, the challenge of contested identities, and the potential for identity reconstruction/expansion (e.g., hybrid selves, global selves, multilingual selves) through intercultural engagement, reflection, and study abroad. We also problematise imaginaries about identity in study abroad research and practice. In our discussion, we underscore the multifarious nature of language, identity and interculturality in relation to study abroad. We conclude the chapter with suggestions for researchers of identity and interculturality in study abroad contexts.

Positioning language and identity

Identity refers to one's self-concept or sense of self. Simply put, it defines how individuals view themselves or imagine their positioning in the world. Understandings of identity have evolved over time. In contrast with early identity theorists who portrayed identity as fixed and unitary (Erikson 1968; Joseph 2016), poststructuralists tend to use the plural form 'identities' in recognition of the complex, multiple strands of selfhood (Baxter 2016). Norton and Toohey (2002) offer examples to highlight differences in the ways individuals are conceived.

While humanist conceptions of the individual – and many definitions of

> the individual in SLA research – presuppose that every person has an essential, unique, fixed and coherent 'core' (introvert/extrovert; motivated/ unmotivated), poststructuralism depicts the individual – the subject – as diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and space (Norton and Toohey 2002: 121).

Poststructuralist orientations position individuals (e.g., student sojourners) as 'social agents' who have some responsibility for their own learning. Drawing attention to the fluid or dynamic nature of identity, cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall (1990: 222) writes,

> Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think instead of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside representation.

Poststructuralists observe that people have many dimensions to their sense of self (e.g., linguistic, personal, social, cultural, gender) that may change as they mature and gain life experience, such as exposure to multiple languages and diverse ways of being while studying abroad. Students who are members of the majority group in their home environment may give little thought to their identities until they travel or study abroad and/or experience life as a minority for the first time. Being different from the majority may stimulate deeper contemplation about multiple dimensions of their identities (e.g., cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, national) and lead to a higher level of self-awarness. Hence, the phenomenon of identity change or reconstruction is often associated with transformative experience, that is, life events that may provoke reflection on one's sense of self (Mezirow 2009; Ting-Toomey 2015). (In Chapter 7 we explain that this 'transformation' may not occur in study abroad

students without some form of intercultural intervention, that is, international experience alone may be insufficient to propel students to a higher level of intercultural competence.)

Depending on the situation and context, individuals may stress different dimensions of their sense of self. Identity salience refers to 'the degree to which an identity is prominent or stands out to us in a given situation' (Oetzel 2009: 59). The salience of a particular identity can influence an individual's affective state and behaviour as each identity carries with it certain understandings (e.g., knowledge), beliefs, associations (e.g., memories) and expectations. Certain elements of an individual's identity may become more salient or meaningful in particular social situations, depending, in part, on the communication partner(s), the discourse, and the context. For example, the quality of the relationship between interlocutors can impact which aspects of an individual's self are emphasised at a particular point in time.

The relationship between identity, language, and culture is multifarious. As Baxter (2016) explains, 'reciprocally, identities are constructed by and through language but they also produce and reproduce innovative forms of language' (p. 34). Many dimensions of our social and cultural identities (e.g., gender, class, nationality, ethnicity) are shaped by the language(s) we speak. During the socialisation process (enculturation), self-identities are shaped through linguistic practice and performance, and reinforced through social interactions with people in one's family and the wider community. Identities continue to evolve as people experience life (e.g., gain study abroad experience).

National affiliation and the instability of identity

National identity and culture have been the centre of attention in study abroad since the 20th century. When students cross national borders, they are often considered representatives of a Nation State, symbolised by the passport they carry. Many contemporary institutions of higher education and organisations that fund international educational experience stress this dimension in their websites and related materials that promote their study abroad programmes. While in the host country, student sojourners may see themselves as 'cultural or national ambassadors' (Dolby 2004, 2005, 2007; Jackson 2015d; Patron 2007) and feel under some pressure to convey a positive image of their home country and home institution, even if they have not been prodded to assume these roles. In contrast, other student sojourners may reject this identification and prefer to be viewed as independent from a regional or national affiliation and the baggage that comes with it (e.g., political, religious, social, linguistic).

The idea of national identity and culture is a remnant of Modernity which emerged in the 18th century. National borders started to be established then and passports and national identity cards began to serve as 'proofs of identity' for cross-border activities. For Zygmunt Bauman (2004: 23), national identity was never treated like other identities. He adds (ibid.): 'Unlike other identities that did not demand unequivocal allegiance and exclusive fidelity, national identity would not recognize competition, let alone an opposition' (p. 23). This has led to two world wars and to the extermination of those who did not fit into the national 'boxes' determined by this identity in the 20th century. Although the end of the Second World War marked the beginning of a postmodern and postcolonialist world (Maffesoli 1988), national identity and its spectres are enmeshed in today's globalisation. In her book *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970*, Walton (2009) offers a diachronic study of educational travel between a European country (France) and the United States. The author charts the meanings and changing purposes of study abroad

in this crucial modern and emerging postmodern era. She also shows how the issue of national identity has evolved in relation to study abroad in the last100 years.

The emphasis on national identity in the research methodologies employed in cross-border studies is referred to as 'methodological nationalism' or the use/naturalization of the Nation State as the principal and only identity marker to examine intercultural encounters (Amelina, Devrimsel, Faist and Schiller 2012). Methodological nationalism represents a bias which can lead to essentialism (Holliday 2010). Gelman (2003: 3) defines essentialism as 'the view that categories have an underlying reality or true nature that one cannot observe directly but that gives an object its identity.' In other words, essentialism makes us believe that individuals and groups have 'essences' that dictate who they are, how they behave, and what they think. Sen (2006: xv) summarises well the idea of essentialism with the expression 'the illusion of a unique and choiceless identity'. For de Singly (2003: 81) methodological nationalism represents a potential 'abuse of power' or a 'form of totalitarism', which rids individuals of their agency.

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2004) has characterised identity as being 'solid' and/or 'liquid', referring to people's essentialist tendencies (solid) and more open and constructionist aspects of identity (liquid). In fact, we could use the metaphor of 'liquid crystals' to characterise identity. Liquid crystals have both properties of liquids and solid crystals. Our times of accelerated globalisation, whereby individuals, ideas, objects, technologies, etc. circulate faster than ever, have led to many people losing their bearings in their own society thus, often, resorting to 'solidify' their national identity (Appadurai 2006; see nationalism). Like Berthoz (2009: 8), we could compare this to the Ancient Greek hero Theseus who is lost in a labyrinth without a clew (a ball of thread) to find his way out of a labyrinth. The clew represents the

Nation State that can save people from being crushed by complexity. At the same time, accelerated globalisation allows people to explore their identity and to renegotiate it almost unceasingly (Amselle 2010). This leads us to several important characteristics of identity: It is always emergent, contradictory, and performed and thus 'inescapably diverse' (Sen 2006: 4).

In their 2014 article, Young, Barrett, Young-Rivera and Lovejoy maintain that study abroad experience has a clear impact on students' self-images (see self-transformations in Ellwood 2009) associated with personal identity but very little on the way they identify with their country. Interestingly, in contrast, other studies (e.g., with non-Europeans) have found that study abroad students may develop a stronger attachment to a national identity (imagined conception of home nation) while in the host country especially if they do not feel welcomed or they spend all of their free time with co-nationals (e.g., Brown 2009; Hail 2015; Jackson 2015d). The disparate findings highlight the complexity of the relationship between self-identities (e.g., attachment to a national identity) and study abroad experience. (See Chapter 5 for more discussion on the many internal and external elements that can lead to differing sojourn outcomes, including variations in how students see themselves and their positioning in the world).

To summarise, one could say that constancy and stability (national identity) as well as inconsistency and unpredictability (a dynamic quality) characterise identity (Lifton 1993: 1). In what follows we discuss how this contradiction occurs.

The politics of identity: Ascription and avowal

As asserted earlier, identity is malleable. This does not mean, however, that people can change their identity the way they want to or always be viewed as they wish. The identities of

individuals are affected by how other individuals or groups define or label them (e.g., 'put them into boxes'). An avowed identity is the one that individuals wish to present or claim in an interaction. As Oetzel (2009) explains, avowal refers to 'the process of telling others what identity(ies) you wish to present or how you see yourself' (p. 62). For example, when interacting with co-nationals abroad, a student sojourner may prefer to converse in their common home language to signal the strength of in-group bonds and facilitate the communication process. In some situations, the student may be reluctant to use the host language when in the company of 'ingroup members' for fear of being 'outgrouped' and labelled a show-off (Jackson 2014). The use of a particular language, dialect or communication style can serve as a powerful identity marker. Not surprisingly, the issue of language choice has captured the attention of many sociolinguists (e.g., Meyers-Scotton 2002).

Individuals and groups can freely select some dimensions of their identities that they wish to present to others. For example, people may convey a particular image through adornments, speech, communication styles, or dress; however, people are not entirely free to adopt any identities they want. The perception of others also impacts how individuals are viewed and positioned in a specific situation and context. An ascribed identity is the one that other people assign or give to us. Oetzel (2009) defines ascription as 'the process of assigning in another person what you think his or her identity should be' (p. 62). Factors such as language, accent, ethnicity, age, dress, skin colour, social class, communication style, and gender, among others, can influence how others see and categorize us. Consequently, a sojourner's preferred identities may not be the ones that are recognised and respected by others, which can be an irritant in intercultural interactions. When attempts to express one's identity preferences are repeatedly overlooked, it can become a source of friction and a barrier to constructive intercultural relations.

The term ‘contested identity’ refers to facets or elements of one’s identity that are not accepted by the people we are in contact with. In some circles, the identity an individual wishes to project (e.g., English language self) may not be fully recognized and accepted by locals (first language speakers). That is, it may be contested or challenged. For example, after living abroad for many months, an international exchange student may feel at home in the host environment and begin to feel a part of the local scene. Nevertheless, her accent, physical appearance, temporary status, and lack of familiarity with some of the local social norms may set her apart from locals who persist in viewing her as an outsider.

It always takes the presence, influence and pressure of an Other to (re)position, resist, bring about and (dis-)affiliate identity – in other words, to ‘do identity’ (Howarth 2002). According to Gallagher (2011: 492) research on identity therefore should cover the aspects of *self-in-the-other* and *other-in-the-self.* R. D. Laing (1961: 81) argues that, without these continua, identity is ‘distorted’. He adds (ibid.: 86):

> A person’s own ‘identity’ cannot be completely abstracted from his identity-for-others. His identity-for-himself; the identity others ascribe to him; the identities he ascribes to them; the identity or identities he thinks they attribute to him; what he thinks they think he thinks they think...

The extent to which identity is ‘done’ also depends on the context: (macro level) one’s country, a foreign country, a ‘third’ country; (micro level) a pub, a shop, a university lecture hall, a dorm room, etc. Depending on these contexts and the interlocutor(s), identity might be triggered in different ways: to one’s benefit or detriment (stereotypes, positive/negative evaluations, xenophobia/xenophilia and even racism, evoking the ‘dark’ sides of identity). The

interdependence with the other for identity work is often referred to as the 'politics of identity' (Kaufmann 2014; Khan 2005). The very root of the word interculturality, *inter-*, reflects this central aspect of identity. When two people from different countries meet, like in any other form of human interaction, they negotiate different kinds of identities, often starting from their national identity ('*Where are you from?*'). At first, individuals might reveal a preference for their own national group and employ comparative discourses about cultures that make their group 'superior' to others. This phenomenon, which is characterized by frequent 'us vs. them discourse' is called 'ethnocentrism'. In this monocultural orientation, 'one's own culture is central to reality and serves as the point of reference for evaluating and interpreting other cultures (Paige and Bennett 2015: 521).

Social networks and the social dimension of identity

For the social psychologist Tajfel (1981: 256) an individual from a particular group might 'seek membership of new groups if these groups have some contribution to make to the positive aspect of his social identity.' In the context of study abroad this might be a group representing the 'local' identity, other national groups or a mix of these groups. Thus, the evolving social networks of study abroad students are a subject that has garnered the attention of a growing number of contemporary researchers (e.g., Rienties and Jindal-Snape 2016b; Mitchell 2015). A social network may be defined as 'a structure comprised of individuals who are connected with others by one or more specific types of interdependence, such as friendship, kinship, or common interests' (Dewey, Ring, Gardner and Belnap 2012: 114).

Research on the social networks of student sojourners has underscored the need to pay close attention to the relationship between language identity, community involvement (e.g., friendship ties, access to local communities of practice), second language socialisation, and

translanguaging (Li 2011; Mitchell 2015; Pérez-Vidal and Howard 2014; Shiri 2015). A 'community of practice' refers to 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations–in short, practices– emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavour' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464). Within this framework, the second language socialization of newcomers is regarded as a process of gradually gaining competence and membership in a given community (e.g., a student organization at the host institution, homestay), provided there is adequate access.

Within study abroad contexts, investigations in the U.S. and the U.K. have found that the quality and diversity of the social networks that student sojourners develop can affect their academic, intercultural, language, psychological, and social development (Dewey et al. 2012, 2013; Mitchell 2015). Similarly, Kinginger's (2010, 2011) investigations of American learners of French in France, Trentman's (2015) study of American learners of Arabic in Egypt, and Jackson's (2011, 2016c, 2016d, 2017a) investigations of Chinese study abroad students in English-speaking countries are just a few of the many studies that have sought to better understand how social networks can play a role in the language and intercultural development and identity reconstruction of student sojourners.

Dervin (2008) notes a tendency amongst Erasmus students to avoid contact with people from their own national group, believing that such contact is counterproductive for language and culture learning. Härkönen and Dervin (2015) observed a clear hierarchy in the desire to mix with the Other, whereby the 'local' is a priority, other international students hold a second place and people of the same nationality represent the least desirable individuals who seem to provide students with a negative identity (e.g. they are not open-minded and/or curious enough).

The Erasmus programme has explicit goals, with a clear emphasis on intercultural interactions and this may help to explain why Härkönen and Dervin's (2015) findings differ from many other studies that have examined the social networks of study abroad students. While it is common for students to express the desire to make friends with host nationals prior to venturing abroad, researchers in many parts of the world have discovered that study abroad students often spend nearly all of their free time with co-nationals and end up having a 'bubble experience' abroad (Hendrickson, Rosen and Aune 2010; Montgomery 2010). Alternatively, student sojourners may seek out other international students from different parts of the world due to common interests. A smaller number of newcomers cultivate relationships with host nationals, in part, due to the difficulty of breaking into well-established social circles, especially since local students may not feel the need to develop relationships with them.

With more recognition of the potential impact of social networks (diversity, strength, quality of interactions) on the identities and sense of belonging of student sojourners, the number of researchers who are exploring this dimension in various study abroad contexts continues to grow (e.g., Hendrickson et al. 2010; Mitchell 2015; Mitchell, Tracy-Ventura and McManus 2017; Trentman 2015). (In Chapter 5 we explore some of the internal and external elements that can lead to varying degrees of exposure to local communities of practice, host nationals, and international students from home and other parts of the world. These factors, in turn, can influence how study abroad students see themselves and engage in language and intercultural learning.)

While much of the literature on study abroad centers on the importance of meaningful intercultural interactions between local and international students, it is also essential to

recognize the value of social connections with international students from other parts of the world. These intercultural interactions can prompt newcomers to think more about their place in the world (eg., how they are viewed by others, how they see themselves, how they are changing as they gain more real world experience). It is also helpful to recognise the possible benefits of interactions with co-nationals (e.g., socio-emotional support, comraderie), which can ease acculturative stress and potentially provide encouragement for the seeking out of intercultural relationships.

The multifarious, multifaceted nature of identity

At a more micro level of interpersonal encounters, identity is much more complex (see the aforementioned metaphor of the liquid crystal) as it is also often a matter of discovery. The notion of intersectionality is very useful here. For many scholars, examining identity from a predominating framework is somewhat inadequate (e.g. national or cultural identity) and simplifies identity work. As a stranger in a foreign land, the experience of a foreign student does not make sense if it is not examined within social structures that are interlocking (see Collins 1990). Dimensions such as gender, social class, religion, sexuality but also race and ethnicity are all social constructs that contribute to people 'doing' identity together, and in relation to larger structures of potential oppression and privilege. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002: 324) argue: '[m]uch of transnational studies overstates the internal homogeneity and boundedness of transnational communities; they overestimate the binding power for individual action; they overlook the importance of cross-community interactions as well as the internal divisions of class, gender, religion and politics.'

Researchers have concentrated on various aspects of identity and participation in study abroad research (Kinginger 2013). For instance, Shames and Alden (2005) have examined the impact

of short-term study abroad on the identity changes of students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. Murray Brux and Fry (2010) explain that students of colour (whom they refer to as 'multicultural students') rarely participate in study abroad programmes because of financial and administrative issues, amongst others. In another example, Bryant and Soria (2015) concentrate on the study abroad experience of bisexual, gay or lesbian, questioning, self-identified queer, transgender, and gender queer students (LGBTQQ).

The concept of power, another central concept in the human and social sciences today, thus becomes essential to pinpoint the interconnectedness of identities, privileges and structures (Dill and Zambrana 2009). Several aspects of power relations in intercultural encounters need unpacking to understand what is happening. For instance, it is important to be aware of the ideologies, symbols and images that each participant in an intercultural encounter holds of each other, in terms of different identities (male/female/other; atheist/Muslim/Lutheran; etc.) and to examine how these become relevant in the way they talk to each other and treat each other. Brah and Phoenix (2004: 76) refer to these as 'multiple axes of differentiation'. As identity in *inter*-culturality relies on the presence of two people *a minima*, in order to study it, 'what we must ask is "*Identity in whose eyes*?'" (Howarth 2002: 20). Dolby's (2005) study is interesting in this regard – although it has the potential to lead to some form of essentialising. In her article, she compares the impact of study abroad on Australian and American undergraduates. Because of their different symbolic power in the world – the author claims that American students have a strong national identity while Australians' is weak – Australian students are more prone to a robust global sense of place. She notes, however, that they are less willing to tolerate racial and ethnic diversity than American students.

Imaginaries about identity in study abroad

For better and/or worse, as far as we know, intercultural engagement during study abroad has the potential to lead to identity reconstruction and expansion (e.g., the cultivation of a cosmopolitan, global mindset, the strengthening a regional identification) and is part of the 'unstoppable experimentation' of people's identity building (Bauman 2004: 85). It is noteworthy that since the early 2000s the use of social media such as Facebook, WeChat or Twitter have become fully integrated into many study abroad contexts and they, too, contribute to identity experimentation abroad.

An increasing number of studies deal with social media in study abroad. In 2016 Forbush and Foucault-Welles published a paper that explored the impact of the use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) by Chinese students in the US. They report that the more SNSs are used to link up with the host country before and during the stay, the more significant the levels of social and academic adaptation are. This, in turn, enables the students to negotiate more complex identities by the end of their stay abroad. In another similar study, Mikal, Yang and Lewis (2015) note that social media can alleviate stress, and support 'integration' and learning while abroad. In *"Oh, I'm Here!": Social Media's Impact on the Cross-cultural Adaptation of Students Studying Abroad* Sandel (2013) analyses in-depth interviews with students abroad about their use of social media and online communication. Interestingly the author notes that social media can serve as 'identity buffers' with both the host country and distant family members, and thus support their identity work.

Study abroad experience might also influence and shift students' 'habitual ego' (Wilkins 2001: 2). Zamani-Gallaher, Leon and Lang (2016) talk about 'study abroad as self-authorship'. For instance, a student may usually identify as shy and modify his/her representation of self after some time abroad. It is vital to note, however, that this does not happen automatically. Howarth

(2002: 19) explains that 'there are limits to how far we can opt in and out of identities'. She gives the examples of skin colour and gender of which "the gaze of the other makes these identities unavoidable" (ibid.). You may recall our earlier discussion of contested identities. Some studies have compared the self-identity shifts of students who have studied abroad with those who studied in their home country. For example, in Europe, Jacobone and Moro's (2014) investigation of the self-identities of Erasmus students compared with those who remained on the home campus found that those with study abroad experience developed a stronger sense of a European identity and provided evidence of a deeper level of cultural and language learning.

There are a certain number of (old and new) imaginaries about identity in discourses about the benefits of study abroad. Imaginaries correspond to the way(s) one imagines one's social existence (Taylor 2004). Imaginaries are often based on specific ideologies that represent how individuals view their 'real conditions of existence' (Althusser 1971: 162). One of the most widespread imaginaries is based on the idea that study abroad allows students to find their identity/their self. This very old ideology seems to relate to the Ancient Greek aphorism γνῶθι σεαυτόν ("know thyself") from the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Another imaginary relates to national culture and identity, students are often reported to have become like the Other, to have acquired a culture and/or a language like a 'native'. Finally, related to intercultural learning, it is not unusual for study abroad returnees to assert that they have learnt to be open-minded, not to have stereotypes anymore or to have become 'citizens of the world' (see Dervin 2008; Härkönen and Dervin 2016; Jackson 2008, 2010, 2011; Kinginger 2013).

A number of scholars have dealt with study abroad as a promoter of global citizenry (See Lewin 2009 for an edited collection of papers on this topic). In their 2009 study of American undergraduates, Hendershot and Sperandio describe the importance given to the development

of global citizen identities and the practice of cosmopolitan ideas by study abroad returnees. Using a pre-/post-test design to gauge the impact of study abroad, Tarrant, Rubin and Stoner (2013) found that the fostering of global citizenry to be an important added value of international educational experience.

Within Europe, many scholars have attempted to evaluate the potential 'Europeanising impact' of the Erasmus programme ('the Erasmus Effect', see Mitchell 2015), which was created somewhat to boost European identity amongst the youth. In their 2003 article, King and Ruiz-Gelices analyse a large postal survey to Sussex graduates who had studied abroad in another European country. The authors found that the students had developed a more 'European' identity or consciousness, although they warn of the need to nuance this result. Using a mixed-method approach, Van Mol (2013) discovered that after a stay abroad, students differ in the way they discuss their European identity. Drawing on a study involving 1,729 study abroad students from 28 universities in six countries, Mitchell (2014) contradicts previous studies by claiming that the Erasmus exchange programme provokes significant and positive identification with Europe. In all of these studies, there is a lack of critical engagement with what Europe is (European Union? Europe as a historical, political, cultural, linguistic entity?), which makes the results problematic.

In terms of identity, these discourses represent neo-solid aspects of the liquid crystal. There is a shift but it is one-dimensional/-directional (from one national/linguistic identity to another) and idealistic (can open-mindedness be achieved entirely?). These shifts also often appear to be self-sufficient ('I am now more tolerant than others'; 'I am interculturally competent because I know their culture', etc.) and can be counter-productive as they lead to essentialisation. In his article 'The Personal consequences of a year of study abroad', Nash

(1976) notes that, over long-term, such discourses of change (which he calls 'personality changes'), do not persist after return home. There is thus a need for long-term research on these imaginaries.

Ideally, in order to reflect further on identity in relation to interculturality, Holliday, Hyde and Kullman (2004) suggest that one should 'respond to people according to how you find them rather than according to what you have heard about them'; 'avoid easy answers about how people are. Bracket – put aside simplistic notions about what is "real" or "unreal" in your perception of 'another culture'; 'appreciate that every society is as complex and culturally varied as your own' (amongst others).

Language identity and study abroad

The study of identity and language in study abroad has probably had the longest tradition, especially since the appearance of the 'social turn' in research (Block 2003). Identity is seen implicitly and explicitly as pivotal in *linguistic gain and use* (Carroll 1967; Freed 1995; Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott and Brown 2013).

For applied linguist David Block (2007, language identity refers to 'the assumed and/or attributed relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication which might be known as a language (e.g., English), a dialect (e.g., Geordie) or a sociolect (e.g., football-speak)' (p. 40. This notion of language identity is associated with language expertise (proficiency in a particular language), language affiliation (attitudes towards the language), and language inheritance (being born into a family or community where the language is spoken) (Block 2007). Language identity is also linked to the notions of avowal and ascription that were explained earlier in this chapter. For example, individuals may wish to be

affiliated with a particular social or cultural group (e.g., host community) through the use of the host language (avowed identity) but first language speakers (host nationals) may continue to regard them as outsiders no matter how well they master the language and follow the prevailing sociopragmatic norms of politeness (ascribed identity).

It is essential to note here that while language use in study abroad does not systematically involve speaking a foreign language, the vast majority of student sojourners have to use linguistic forms that differ from those 'normally' used 'at home'. The model of reference for linguistic gains for those who have to learn to use a different language has often been that of the 'native speaker' (Magnan and Back 2007).

Benson et al. (2013) define second language identity broadly as 'any aspect of a person's identity that is connected to their knowledge or use of a second language' (p. 28). Interestingly, In their investigation of the second language identities of student sojourners, Benson and his colleagues found that '[t]here appears to be… a chain of variables in which the identities students bring to and imagine they will adopt in the study abroad setting lead to certain patterns of engagement, which in turn influence identity development' (p. 144). (See Chapter 5 for more discussion about variables that can impact the way sojourns unfold, including agency and self-efficacy).

In recent years, the study of the processes and outcomes of second language use in study abroad has shifted from quantitative to qualitative perspectives (or a combination of both) and more attention is being paid to the complex connection between language, culture, and identity. With more awareness of the limitations of large-scale, product-oriented studies that rely on quantitative surveys, there is now a push for empirical study abroad research that incorporates

multiple types of data (e.g., blogs, interviews, questionnaire surveys, digital images, sociograms/social network maps) to develop a comprehensive picture of study abroad experience and identity reconstruction (Deardorff 2015; Jackson 2012, 2016d; Kinginger 2013). Hence, we have noticed the publication of more case studies and narrativised accounts that center on the language and intercultural development and identity expansion of study abroad students in various parts of the world (Benson et al. 2013; Jackson 2008, 2010, 2016d; Kinginger 2008; Mitchell 2015). This is a welcome development as it is enriching our awareness and understanding of how diverse study abroad experience can be.

In particular, the affective dimension has captured the attention of many study abroad researchers, who have discovered that student sojourners may feel differently depending on the language they use (e.g., first language, host language) and the context of the interaction (Jackson 2008, 2010). In some cases, study abroad students may change their perception of their second language as they become more fluent and gain experience with the use of the language in social situations. If they have primarily used their second language in formal, academic contexts prior to going abroad, their feelings about the language may change after they gain experience with informal discourse and begin to build intercultural relationships. They may move from an instrumental orientation towards the language (e.g., perceptions of it as a tool for professional advancement) to one in which they feel that the language has become a part of them (e.g., Jackson 2008, 2010, 2011, 2016d). In this way, they may experience a broadening of their language identity.

In his 2013 chapter, Brown explored the use of Korean honorifics by advanced male second language learners who were studying in Korea. He noted a gap in their knowledge and usage of honorific norms at the end of their stay, which he related to their identities. In a similar vein,

Iwasaki (2013) reported on the use of hedges by second language learners of Japanese. She found that after a sojourn in Japan, they use a wider range of hedges, which has a positive influence on their identity making in this context. In an article that combines the social interactive and pragmatic dimensions of language, Kinginger (2015) argues that study abroad should stimulate students to reflect on linguistic choices in a variety of interpersonal, social and cultural contexts. In another example, Müller and Schmenk (2017) explored the relationship between Canadian students' identity as learners of German and their pronunciation of that language while taking part in a study abroad programme in Germany. They observed that the self-constructions of the learners were associated with the 'native-speaker' ideal and this constrained the development of their identity as German language users.

From a broader perspective, Pellegrino Aveni (2005) examined how second language use contributes to constructing self-presentation in study abroad. The author described the intersecting factors (e.g., self-esteem, anxiety, control, age, gender, etc.) that appeared to support and/or limit the sojourners' interactions and expression of their personalities in a second language. To better understand how one might improve the effectiveness of study abroad, Benson et al. (2013) employed a more specific approach (narrative research) and examined three interrelated dimensions of second language identity: identity-related second language competence (development of sociopragmatic competence), linguistic self-concept (the way the students see themselves as language learners) and second language-mediated personal competence (intercultural and academic competence). In her book *Language, Identity and Study Abroad: Sociocultural Perspectives*, Jackson (2008) uses sociocultural and identity theories to explain the effect of study abroad on students' sense of self and perceptions of language and culture. She argues that knowledge of the perspectives can support students in their identity work abroad and to develop a 'third kind', an *intercultural personhood*.

Also, informed by a sociocultural framework, amongst others, the UK Economic and Social Research Council-funded LANGSNAP project (Social Networks, Target Language Interaction and Second Language Acquisition during the Year Abroad: A Longitudinal Study), which is described in the volume *Anglophone Students Abroad* (Mitchell et al., 2017), followed 57 British undergraduate language majors over a period of 21 months. The main objective of the project was to examine the relationship between the students' identities, their social experiences and their second language development (French and Spanish). The researchers tracked in detail how the students navigated through their changing sense of self, multiple identities (students, young adults, language learners, etc.) and evolving relationship.

One last strand of research relates to the use of lingua francas in study abroad. Today's major lingua franca is English, but any language in a study abroad context is a potential lingua franca (for French, see Behrent 2007 or Dervin 2013). Research on the perception and use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in study abroad is emerging. The issue of identity and ELF has been researched, for instance, in the United Kingdom (Jenks 2016), Germany and Finland (Virkulla and Nikula 2010), United States (Lee 2016). Several studies concentrate on specific students. For example, Sung (2014a) examines the development and perception of English as a second language learners' 'global identity' from Hong Kong. He notes that the students held different views as to what this desired identity meant and entailed. In another study the same author (2014b) shows how the students dis-/identify with other ELF speakers – and make judgements about them – depending on their origins.

Multicultural/multilingual identities and intercultural education

Linked to the concept of transformation and identity reconstruction (or expansion) is the emergence of a multicultural identity, which Martin and Nakayama (2008: G-4) define as '[a] sense of in-betweeness that develops as a result of frequent or multiple cultural border crossings'. These interculturalists maintain that individuals with ample intercultural experiences may acquire 'an identity that transcends one particular culture', that is, border crossers may 'feel equally at home in several cultures' (p. 112) and languages. For example, study abroad students who fully immerse themselves in the host environment and open themselves up to new ways of being may develop hybrid (mixed) identities that integrate diverse cultural elements (e.g., multiple languages, local values, global perspectives) (Kraidy 2005; Kramsch 1993) that help them to function in today's multicultural world. In some cases, they may feel that they have nurtured both a global and a local self. A number of experienced intercultural educators argue that this is more likely to happen when guided, critical reflection (e.g., mentoring, experiential learning) is embedded into the study abroad programme (Jackson and Oguro 2018a; Paige 2013; 2015b).

Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2010: 96) observe that '[t]he process of negotiating multiple cultural identities is complex and multi-faceted' and, in some, intense feelings of loss and inbetweeness may emerge in border crossers. Some study abroad students may feel torn between different cultural worlds, identities, and languages. Suffering from identity confusion, they may experience difficulty functioning in daily life and feel on the periphery of the languages and cultures they are in contact with. A well-designed intercultural intervention (e.g., online course, series of workshops and debriefings) can help students make sense of their international experience and identity conflicts/awakenings.

Study abroad experience is variable. While some study abroad students may experience identity confusion and fragmentation, others may take full advantage of the opportunities that their mobility and multicultural, multilingual experiences afford them, especially when adequate support and encouragement are provided. With resilience, and a positive mindset, student sojourners may appreciate and embrace their ability to interact with growing ease in different cultural settings in multiple languages. (See Chapter 7 for more discussion about the ways in which pedagogical interventions may help prepare students for identity-related issues that may arise through study abroad. A review of contemporary schemes also points to diverse approaches that are being implemented in various parts of the world to optimise the identity expansion of students during and after study abroad.)

Researching identity

In relation to power and positioning, when researching the identities, language learning, and intercultural development of study abroad students, it is essential to recognize how the status of the home country (e.g., messages in the media) may impact host receptivity and the degree of access to local communities of practice. It is also incumbent on researchers to become attuned to the expectations, concerns, and biases of the newcomers, which can also influence their reception in the new environment and, ultimately, their self-identities (e.g., openness to the process of identity reconstruction, including the cultivation of a more cosmopolitan, global self).

During the research process, it is also imperative for researchers themselves to question their own position in relation to 'doing identity'. Heightened self-awareness and reflexivity are crucial for scholars who seek to better understand the complex connections between interculturality and the 'doing of identity' in study abroad contexts. In her 1994 article

'Working the Hyphens – Reinventing Self and Other in Qualitative Research', Fine claims that '[m]uch of qualitative research has reproduced, if contradiction-filled, a colonising discourse of the "Other"'. She proposes to 'work the hyphen', or the relationships between researchers and their research participants, highlighting here again the interdependence between interlocutors and the *inter-* of the *intercultural*.

Research is also a form of interculturality, whereby two individuals meet to negotiate meaning and identity. Fine (1994: 72) maintains that we should create 'occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, "happening between", within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence'. In a similar vein, Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012: 299) analyse how Othering takes place in research on women in poverty and proposes ways of avoiding it. They suggest fighting against objectification (turning participants into stereotypes 'composed of inferior, mostly negative, features'), decontextualisation (e.g. detachment from a general context of policy and socioeconomic structures), dehistorisation (only focus is the present) and deauthorisation (the article is presented as being autonomous, objective and authorless) (ibid.: 300). As solutions, the authors propose to concentrate on three modes of writing that can remove some traces of Othering in publications: narrative, dialog and reflexivity (ibid.).

Work on identity must pay attention to interdisciplinary discussions and debates in order to enrich theoretical, methodological and analytical aspects of study abroad research. It is also important to use more interactive research processes which fully include the researcher (e.g., provide details about his or her positioning, relevant prior experiences); this could make the reporting of research results fairer as potential researcher biases are more evident. The

importance of language use is also essential when examining identity in study abroad contexts. Finally, intersecting different identity markers – rather than concentrating on the 'routine' issue of cultural and national difference – represents an important step in trying to identify complex facets of identity – bearing in mind that one will never be able to describe an identity in full. Related to this last point, it is more and more critical to include discussions of social justice in study abroad research. As a negotiated and power-laden phenomenon, 'doing' identity should entail resisting and navigating stereotypes, prejudice and different forms of -ism (nationalism, ethnocentrism, linguism, etc.).

Conclusion

This chapter emphasised the important links between identity, interculturality and study abroad, and provided an overview of contemporary, poststructuralist notions that have implications for research and practice in our field. We discussed the potential relationship between national identity and study abroad, the politics of identity, the social dimensions of identity (e.g., the impact of social networks on study abroad), and the multifarious nature of identity. We also reviewed and contested multiple imaginaries about identity in study abroad and touched on some of the many factors that can influence identity development and lead to differences in how study abroad students see themselves and their positioning in the host environment.

Finally, in this chapter we discussed the potential benefits of pedagogical intercultural interventions to help students deal with identity-related issues in study abroad contexts and offered some advice for scholars who research interculturality and identity in study abroad contexts. In the next Chapter we explore in more detail some of the many internal and external elements that can bring about variations in the imagined second language identities and intercultural developmental trajectories of student sojourners.

Further reading and resources

Benson, P., Barkhuizen, G., Bodycott, P. and Brown, J. (2013) *Second Language Identity in Narratives of Study Abroad,* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

This book includes case study narratives that illustrate how diverse programme elements and individual differences can lead to variations in the second language identity development of study abroad students.

Dervin, F. and Risager, K. (eds) (2015) *Researching Identity and Interculturality,* New York: Routledge.

This edited collection focuses on advances in research methodology that centers on discourses of identity and interculturality. It includes a range of qualitative studies: studies of interaction, narrative studies, conversation analysis, ethnographic studies, postcolonial studies and critical discourse studies, and underscores the role of discourse and power in investigations of identity and interculturality. Critical reflexivity is emphasized throughout.

Jackson, J. (2008) *Language, Identity, and Study Abroad,* London: Equinox.

Drawing on sociocultural theories, this monograph centers on the language and intercultural learning and identity awakening of study abroad students from Hong Kong who took part in a study abroad programme in the U.K. Cases are provided that illustrate different developmental trajectories.

Kinginger, C. (2015) 'Student mobility and identity-related language learning', *Intercultural Education,* 26(1): 6-15, DOI: 10.1080/14675986.2015.992199

This journal article reviews some recent studies that problematize various dimensions of identity in relation to mobile students' encounters with the socio-pragmatic aspects of language.

Mitchell, R., Tracy-Ventura, N. and McManus, K. (2017) *Anglophone Students Abroad: Identity, Social Relationships and Language Learning,* London and New York: Routledge.

Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, this volume presents the findings of a study that centred on the language learning, social networking, integration, and identity developments of British students of French and Spanish who were participating in a residence abroad programme.